



## **GSS Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, January 26, 2022 5:30 pm**

**Student Union, Room 169**

Senators Present: Refer to Appendix

Ex-Officio Members Present: Millie Turner Cheatham, Dixie Thompson

### **Opening Remarks - George Fields**

1. Call to Order
  - a. Hello everyone and welcome to our fifth senate session of the 2021-2022 academic year. Thank you for being here today.
  - b. Raise your hand if you wish to be acknowledged. For those on zoom, please raise your hand and one of the moderators will notify me so I can acknowledge you. Once you have the floor, you may speak. Always introduce yourself with your name and voting number so that we can make note in the meeting minutes.
  - c. There was a reported OIT outage today that was impacting a sharepoint and CAS system (login). If you have technical issues, please email [gss2@utk.edu](mailto:gss2@utk.edu) and we will work to get them resolved.
  
2. Attendance
  - a. As we take attendance, I want to give the new senators some information regarding attendance and voting procedures. We will use QR codes provided during each session. Links will be provided to zoom senators.

Make sure you are logged in with your UTK net ID for your attendance to be valid. The form will not work if you are using a personal gmail account. If you receive an error message, click on "learn more," which will then prompt you to log in with your UTK net ID.

- b. You must send your proxy email and name in advance so that we have it on record. If someone attempts to count attendance or vote using someone's number and they are not on file, it will not be valid.
- c. We will take attendance before/after each senate meeting
- d. Zoom specific rules for attendance and voting reminder.
  - i. You must have your video on and mute yourself the entire time unless acknowledged.
  - ii. Video must be on so that we can verify the identity of each Zoom senator, and ensure attendance/vote security.
  - iii. Your attendance/vote(s) will not count if our technical officer cannot verify your identity on Zoom via video, name, and net id (logged into zoom with utk email). Contact [gss2@utk.edu](mailto:gss2@utk.edu) for technical issues or troubleshooting during the senate session.
  - iv. Every senator must have a designated proxy, must be on file for attendance and vote to count. Please send those into [gss2@utk.edu](mailto:gss2@utk.edu) if you have not already designated a proxy.
  - v. If your proxy is attending for you, they must be on file and you must notify us in advance in writing. They will use their name, their UTK ID, your voting number, and check the box indicating that they are a proxy. Make sure you send your proxy the zoom link and time, proxies are often utilized very soon before meetings, please keep yours informed.
- e. Attendance taken via QR codes.
- f. Quorum verified.
- g. Now I will introduce our President, Hunter Hammock, for the President's Report.

### **President's Report - Hunter Hammock**

1. Hello everyone. I want to thank you for being here today and I hope that you are doing well and staying healthy.
  - a. We are excited to start the new year.
  - b. GSS is thankful for your continued participation.
  - c. Your activity in this org is key for our continued success.
  - d. As a senator, you ARE the student leader for your department.

- e. Your role is to lead by example and help motivate them to succeed.
  - f. GSS and admins support you and your work.
  - g. We are here to listen to you and support you in challenging times.
  - h. We want to know what issues and concerns they have.
  - i. Want to know how we can make the grad student experience the best it can be here at UT.
2. I want to again thank our continuing senators, as well as welcome our incoming senators to their first meeting.
- a. We have gained a net of 3 senators, and are working with a number of other departments to acquire representation.
  - b. There has been a high churn rate of senators but we are very appreciative of the active ones. High churn rate likely due to the demanding nature of grad school, as well as variations in scheduling for each of our academic units that send representation.
  - c. One of my major goals for this semester is to acquire 100 percent representation, so all the different academic units are represented on campus.
  - d. Dean Thompson, we will be in touch over the next few weeks and let you know the status of our search for senators to fill spots.
  - e. We are also investigating the process of determining senate representation and ensuring that all students are represented fairly and according to our constitution.
3. As we begin the new year, we will face a variety of challenges, both new and old.
4. Today I want to provide some GSS updates and some of the major wins we've accomplished since our last senate meeting. So that you can pass this information to your respective departments.
- i. Over the break Mohamed and I have had several meetings regarding our strategy for the spring semester.
  - ii. We have refocused our efforts and will begin aggressively pursuing the initiatives we set out last spring now that we have the base and foundation to collect that data.
  - iii. We are thankful for your service on your respective committees, and we look forward to hearing all of their accomplishments and progress since we last met.
5. Current Challenges for Our Students
- a. Student Survey
    - i. Because of our unique and dynamic situation this semester, we will be sending out another senator survey similar to the one we had at

the beginning of the semester to help us further identify common issues that continue to plague our students, as well as uncover new issues that may have arisen within the last few months. Word of mouth is very helpful, but we also want some hard data that we can use to get results. This will also be an opportunity to introduce any new ideas, as we will begin to introduce a number of resolutions over the next few weeks.

b. Covid Safety

- i. One of the biggest challenges students face is health and safety.
- ii. We are echoing the administration's request for safety and respect for the wellbeing of your fellow students.
- iii. We are asking you to wear a mask when appropriate and GSS is encouraging you to wear a mask.
- iv. If you're sick, stay home. Encourage your department to follow suit.

c. Stipends

- i. Financial wellbeing is one of the biggest issues facing our graduate students, and the recent turn the economy has compounded that issue.
- ii. We've continued to hear issues about the standard of living due to the poor financial situation of some students
- iii. We know from the 2020 survey that  $\frac{1}{3}$  of our students are food insecure, which indicates a severe standard of living issue.
- iv. The past year has increased that problem exponentially, and we are doing another survey to get current information.
- v. Want to provide compensation for the work grad students do, and students can't do their work if they aren't sure where to find their next meal.
- vi. If we want to keep recruiting top-tier talent, we should establish ourselves as a trendsetter in the SEC for providing stipends and setting a high standard for pay and living.

d. Looking to boost equal representation for gss

- i. Ensure our voices are heard, even though the undergrad population is larger, we still need to be represented.

e. Proposal to appoint senators to SGA and faculty senate to better coordinate our efforts

- i. Many similarities in the difficulties undergraduate students face that graduate students face.

- ii. Faculty senate fully supports this, looking forward to working with us.
  - iii. Moving forward, each administration shall appoint reps for each org so we can coordinate more effectively.
- 6. Number of fun events planned for this semester.
  - a. Committee chairs will discuss each, including a 5K and Awards Ceremony.
- 7. Have time for a few minutes of discussion after reports, please stay for brainstorming, questions, etc.
- 8. Appreciate all that you all do and we hope you have a nice evening.

### **Vice President's Report - Mohamed Al Sager**

- 1. Hello everyone, thank you for joining us today in our first meeting of the spring semester.
  - a. I would like to welcome both new and returning members of the senate.
  - b. We look forward to working with you and making changes that will improve the graduate student experience.
  - c. Please do not hesitate to voice your opinion and let your voice be heard.
- 2. COVID
  - a. As you know we begin the semester at a time when the COVID cases are high locally and nationally.
  - b. The university tracks reported positive and recovered cases of COVID-19 among students and employees. Positive cases are reported through the COVID support form.
  - c. The number of new cases for each day is based on COVID forms indicating a positive COVID-19 test.
  - d. As of this morning there are a total of 164 active cases.
  - e. Please be cautious and protect yourself and others.
  - f. The University, partnering with Knox county will be holding vaccination clinics here on campus so keep a look out for emails regarding those clinics.
  - g. Also, please continue wearing your masks in classrooms, laboratories, and other public spaces. Masks are widely available across campus.
  - h. Testing is available for all students at the Student Health Center. You can also get a COVID test locally at most drive-through pharmacies.
  - i. If you test positive for COVID or need to quarantine because you were in close contact with someone who tested positive, fill out a COVID support form will help the university guide you to the resources and support you need.

- j. Finally, if you're feeling unwell, please stay home.
  - k. Our position is to use common sense and help each other stay healthy. Brigid will discuss our campaign in depth.
3. Voting
- a. The next topic I'd like to discuss is voting protocols in electing the president and vice president of GSS
  - b. According to the election commission, students enrolled in the Graduate School, College of Veterinary Medicine, or the College of Law, including non-degree seeking (unclassified) students, are eligible to vote.
  - c. In order to keep the election process fair for all candidates, we are seeking to use something similar to what SGA is using, namely VOLink.
  - d. For those of you who do not know, SGA is the Student Government Association which is the undergraduate counterpart to GSS.
  - e. We are considering using the same type of voting platform which tracks voters and whether or not they are eligible to vote and tying that in with our website and bylaws so this process can be streamlined.
  - f. CAS at UTK allows us to track student status and integrate that into the general election vote.
4. Closing Remarks
- a. Thank you all for your attention.
  - b. I wish you all the best of luck this semester. I hope we can continue to work within our internal committees towards the betterment of graduate students here on campus.

## **Internal Committee Reports**

### **Davis Carter, 70 - Finance Committee Chair**

1. Current Account Balance \$13753.41, we haven't spent much money. A lot is budgeted to be spent mainly in April. Checking account is at \$824.
2. Moving forward with creating a contract with Knoxville Track Club for April 9th GSS 5K, they'll help with the logistics of the event.
  - i. Location: Cherokee Farms (pending final approval)
  - ii. Date: April 9th 10AM
  - iii. Participants: You all, friends, family and whoever else you can promote the event to.
  - iv. Planned for the week following GPSAW (Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week), this will be the sort of last event of that week.

- v. Contacting potential sponsors for event
  - 1. If you all know any small business owners (let me know, we can provide an approved sponsorship email)
  - 2. We have several sponsorship levels planned (each level has different perks)
- b. GSS Backdrop
  - i. During the creation of the new backdrop, we realized the current GSS logo is not ideal for this sort of scenario.
  - ii. Would like to create an additional logo for things like this or other usages as needed. Currently calling it a sort of “casual logo” for casual correspondence or t-shirts.
  - iii. This will not replace the current logo, but will be an additional option that we have adapted to meet our needs.
  - iv. If you have design ideas please email me at [ecarte27@utk.edu](mailto:ecarte27@utk.edu) by February 18th.
  - v. Needs to adhere to UT typeface, coloration and beckon to the original document. (Add info from PPT regarding typeface and hex code)
  - vi. 45 (Leighton Chappell) asked if it’s possible to change the size of the flame, Davis responded that slight modifications are acceptable.
  - vii. 31 asked a question about the 5K - do we have a letter/official document that we can present to people? Davis responded there is such a letter, he will send it out for people to use if they know of a potentially interested sponsor.
  - viii. Until the contract is finalized, we cannot take money. We can take verbal agreements that they’ll support with a certain amount, but cannot take checks yet.

## **George Fields, 28 - Judiciary Committee Chair**

- 1. Current Initiatives
  - a. Sept/Oct, committee did a pretty extensive overview of the constitution and bylaws to improve verbiage, update language, correct grammatical and syntax errors, and make substantive changes and additions where needed.
  - b. Working with Legislative Steering on edits and will propose those shortly.
  - c. Special Session Feb 10 5:30-7pm entirely on Zoom where we will present amendments and open for debate.

- d. When a final draft is done, a formal amendment will be drafted and presented to the Senate.
- e. We will present it at the February session, and table it as it must be tabled for one meeting.
- f. We will vote on it at the March session.
- g. Today we are confirming our alternate justice, after one member stepped down.
- h. Thank you.

### **Leighton Chappell, 45 - Programming and Events Committee Chair**

- 1. 5K coming up, organized by fundraising committee
- 2. We will be focusing on the gpsaw awards ceremony
  - a. Currently set for April 6th
  - b. Confirmed Dr Plowmans attendance
  - c. Setting location and times this week
- 3. WISTAR salary negotiation workshop coming up feb 10
  - a. More details coming out tomorrow, meeting about location and time
- 4. Graduation fair coming up in march we will be attending, preparing in march
- 5. Help us promote these events, if you get emails from us about these please send to your department heads
  - a. Especially for WiSTAR, they appreciate our help

### **Igor Bernardi, 26 - Legislation and Steering Committee Chair**

- 1. Our task force groups have moved forward in addressing the initiatives that were mentioned in previous meetings:
  - a. The constitution and bylaws are being reviewed and edited by all members of our committee, in conjunction with the judiciary committee and the leadership team.
  - b. The "grad fees issue" was already mentioned by Hunter earlier, and this is a topic we are certainly working on.
    - i. We need to proceed with caution, because this is very important, financially this is a touchy subject, and we want to make sure we are maximizing our chances of success.
  - c. The advisor360 feedback proposal is in its final stages.
    - i. This initiative ensures graduate students are included in the feedback and performance review process since professional and adequate advising is essential to student success, stability, as well



- as positive graduation rates for their respective programs and the university as a whole.
- ii. We hope this proposal will allow professional reviews from grad students to be included in performance reviews for professors in advising roles.
  - d. We are also making progress on the “accessibility and mobility initiative”, regarding university bus stops and building access.
    - i. We now have the contact information of the personnel responsible for tackling those issues and we are gathering information on how to proceed to pursue these initiatives.
  - e. For “Parking issues” (referring to gameday parking, and others) and “extreme office temperatures,” we are also continuing to gather information and contact personnel, and we look forward to bringing you further updates in the near future.

#### **Hunter Hammock - Equity and Diversity Committee**

1. President delivering committee update, chair not in attendance
2. Committee has been working hard, we will be sending out emails with updates and information about events
3. Big focus currently is the WiSTAR event, quickly approaching
4. Grateful for this committees work and commitment to diversity
5. Council for Diversity and Inclusion has funds available for student organizations and student groups interested in hosting events that support its efforts.
  - a. Please contact me and I’m happy to connect you with their programming chair.

#### **Hunter Hammock - Graduate Student Well-Being Committee**

1. President delivering committee update, chair not in attendance
2. Primary initiative to focus on gathering information regarding all aspects of student wellbeing – mental, physical, social, emotional, and financial.
3. Masking and vaccination promotion and encouragement for information
4. We want to follow the university position on this and spread information to other committees to better influence our upcoming resolutions.

#### **Kassie Hollabaugh, 68 - Travel Awards Committee Chair**

1. Next deadline for travel award is Feb 1st, for people traveling through the end of february

2. Students just need to have it submitted by the deadlines, not signed
3. End of March deadline is next.
4. Summer deadline is at the end of May, the last day June 1st.

#### **BJ Armstead, 44 - Graduate Student Senate Advisory Committee Chair**

1. Emailed 50+ groups that consist of grad students to learn more about what can be done to improve wellbeing of students
2. Finding interested parties to fill Senate spot
3. CRU Ministries, met with this to discuss grad students.
  - a. Is a grad student organization, open to anyone interested in joining.

#### **New Business**

1. Hunter submits his nomination to fill alternate justice spot on judiciary committee
  - a. Bethany Campbell
2. Vote regarding confirmation of nominee for alternate justice position
  - a. 44/49 members in attendance voted for confirmation, Bethany is the new alternate justice.
3. Open Floor
  - a. 27 Benjamin Thornberry
    - i. Mentioned we don't have a way to confirm voter status currently, what are we doing and what is SGA doing
    - ii. Hunter responded SGA uses VOLink, that uses central authentication, and we can integrate student status info with ballot. Much better than google form as done in previous elections.
    - iii. 27 asked if there's any way to do through canvas or involving actual school login
    - iv. Hunter responded SGA currently uses VOLink for their elections, which utilizes CAS. This has worked well for them historically and can be repurposed for our election. We provide a link to the grad student body and they would sign in to VOLink and vote, using their Net ID and password. This verifies each voter automatically and there would not be any chance non-eligible voters would be able to vote using that system. I would also propose that in the upcoming years, we run our elections in tandem with SGA to help encourage voter turnout across campus (only grad students can vote, but it

would help improve turnout for SGA and GSS elections if we market that both student govt is running elections).

- b. 92 Christian Young
  - i. Sending out another survey? Inflation has hit grad students hard, has had multiple students that are considering a part time job. Is the faculty senate working to help raise stipends and improve?
  - ii. Hunter noted that we are working with faculty senate and will have more tangible information by the next meeting, with actual documents
  - iii. Igor responded part of the trickiness is that it involves multiple entities, sometimes funding comes partially from school or other funding sources. Restrictions regarding what money can be used for what fees. Big challenge we face, doing the best we can to maximize results.
- c. 41 Zachary Hyder
  - i. Student health center - maybe for wellbeing chair. Student health does not currently provide pre treatment prophylaxis to prevent contraction of AIDS.
  - ii. Damaging and limiting to queer students especially, but also straight students can be affected and contract aids.
  - iii. Putting strain on local resources and social safety net, would be great if we could get those treatments from UTK, instead of taking that from the truly vulnerable in surrounding community of Knoxville
  - iv. Hunter agrees and moves for wellbeing to gather info and potentially draft a resolution to this effect. In addition to any other preventative measures in this same vein. Determine funding sources and what entities influence what can/cannot be provided.

## **Adjournment**

- 1. Closing Comments
  - a. November minutes coming out shortly, then we will vote to confirm meetings from then and from today's meeting at the next meeting.
- 2. Adjournment
  - a. 70 motions to close the meeting, 27 seconds.
  - b. All in favor say aye.
  - c. Adjourned
- 3. Exec will be hanging around after if anyone has any questions or issues to be brought up, please come talk to us or raise hand on zoom.

4. GSS swag in back of room, please take some.

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**Next Meeting:** Thurs, Feb 24th, 2022 in SU 169 at 5:30

## Appendix: Senator Attendance

### GSS Session 5

01.26.22

Department by College	Voting #	Name	Present
Architecture	1	Sarah Kenney	NO
Landscape Architecture	2	Mary Beth Robbins	YES
Anthropology	3	Brigid Ogden	NO
Anthropology	4	Jason Schaefer	YES
Art	5	--	N/A
Biochemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology	6	Bethany Campbell	YES
Biochemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology	7	Logan Dunn	YES
Chemistry	8	Trevor Wilson	YES
Chemistry	9	Elizabeth O'Connell	YES
Earth and Planetary Sciences	10	Hannah Rigoni	YES
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology	11	Nicole Lussier	YES
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology	12	Nate Gibson	NO
English	13	James Shepard	YES
English	14	Karen Norwood	YES
Geography	15	Victoria Haynes	YES
History	16	Jason Jonson	NO
Life Sciences	17	--	N/A
Mathematics	18	Evan Habbershaw	YES
Mathematics	19	Johannas Krotz	NO

Microbiology	20	--	N/A
Microbiology	21	--	N/A
Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures	22	Sara Rico-Godoy	YES
Music	23	--	N/A
Music	24	--	N/A
Philosophy	25	Anne Merrill	YES
Physics and Astronomy	26	Igor Bernardi	YES
Physics and Astronomy	27	Ben Thornberry	YES
Political Science	28	George Fields	YES
Political Science	29	Caitlin Goff	YES
Psychology	30	Jane Kim	YES
Psychology	31	Rebecca Skadberg	NO
Sociology	32	Ashley Browning	NO
Theatre	33	Rachel Darden	YES
Advertising & Public Relations	34	Dusty Bryan	YES
Communication and Information	35	--	N/A
Information Sciences	36	Jessica Barfield	YES
Information Sciences	37	Kat Capstick	YES
Journalism & Electronic Media	38	--	N/A
Child and Family Studies	39	Cassie Sorrells	YES
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies	40	Jeana Partin	YES
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies	41	Zac Hyder	YES
Educational Psychology and Counseling	42	--	N/A
Educational Psychology and Counseling	43	--	N/A

Kinesiology, Recreation, & Sport Studies	44	BJ Armstead	YES
Kinesiology, Recreation, & Sport Studies	45	Leighton Chappell	YES
Nutrition	46	Anna Jackson	YES
Public Health	47	Catherine Warner	YES
Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management	48	Youngdeok Lee	YES
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education	49	Arianna Banack	YES
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education	50	Jared Huisingh	YES
Accounting and Information Management	51	Jack Badger	YES
Accounting and Information Management	52	Alex Zukowski	YES
Business Administration	53	Joseph Moulden	YES
Business Administration	54	Abigail Ritch	YES
Business Analytics and Statistics	55	--	N/A
Economics	56	Richard Beem	NO
Finance	57	--	N/A
Management & Entrepreneurship	58	--	N/A
Marketing	59	--	N/A
Marketing	60	--	N/A
Supply Chain Management	61	--	N/A
Supply Chain Management	62	--	N/A
Agricultural Leadership, Education, & Communications	63	--	N/A
Agricultural Leadership, Education, & Communications	64	--	N/A
Agricultural & Resource Economics	65	Mary Marks	YES
Animal Science	66	Alison Pfau	YES

Biosystems Engineering and Soil Science	67	Alexis Gillmore	NO
Entomology & Plant Pathology	68	Kassie Hollabaugh	YES
Food Science	69	Melissa Dein	YES
Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries	70	Davis Carter	YES
Plant Sciences	71	Marcia Quinby	YES
Cent/Interdisc Rsrch Grad Edu (Bredesen Center)	72	Dustin Gilmer	NO
Cent/Interdisc Rsrch Grad Edu (Bredesen Center)	73	Isis Fukai	NO
Law	74	Andrew Kern	YES
Law	75	Gina Tanaskoski	YES
Nursing	76	Elliot Loughran	YES
Nursing	77	Courtland Kuntz	YES
Social Work	78	Kiki Kline	YES
Social Work	79	Anna O'Dell	YES
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering	80	--	N/A
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering	81	Austin Conte	YES
Civil & Environmental Engineering	82	Mohammad Safaritaherkhani	NO
Civil & Environmental Engineering	83	Nastaran Moradloo	NO
Electrical Engineering & Computer Science	84	Manu Rathore	NO
Electrical Engineering & Computer Science	85	Samaneh Morovati	YES
Industrial & Systems Engineering	86	Ebrahim Sharifnia	NO
Industrial & Systems Engineering	87	--	N/A
Materials Science & Engineering	88	--	N/A
Materials Science & Engineering	89	--	N/A



Mechanical, Aerospace & Biomedical Engineering	90	--	N/A
Mechanical, Aerospace & Biomedical Engineering	91	--	N/A
Nuclear Engineering	92	Christian Young	YES
Nuclear Engineering	93	Evan Williams	YES
Comparative and Experimental Medicine	94	Wesley Sheley	YES
Comparative and Experimental Medicine	95	Lufuno Phophi	YES